

reduce the deficit. Meaningful deficit reduction will require shared sacrifice, including contributions from those who can best afford to contribute to it.

Today, Budget Committee chairman PATTY MURRAY will introduce a budget that reflects the principle of balance. Senator MURRAY's plan, the Democratic plan, will cut wasteful spending, reduce the deficit, and close tax loopholes that benefit the rich, and it will invest in the things that help our economy grow: education, preventive health care, worker training, and roads and bridges. It will invest in a strong middle class. And unlike the Ryan Republican plan, it won't leave you wondering if it is Groundhog Day all over again.

As things now stand, we are in the midst, as I indicated, of a filibuster to even try to get on the bill. If we get on the bill tomorrow morning, then there will be 30 hours of waiting around, staring at each other. I just alert everyone that we have an Easter recess coming a week from Friday, and we are not going to be able to do that. The budget has a locked-in amount of time, 50 hours, plus the vote-athon. So everyone should be prepared to change their plans for the first few days—we hope it is the first few days—of the Easter recess.

We are not even on this bill, and that is such a sad thing. I thought it was such a good atmosphere here. We had a bill at a decent time from the House. As I indicated yesterday, I didn't like everything in that bill, but we had Senator MIKULSKI and Senator SHELBY working together. They checked in with me and Senator MCCONNELL to let us know how they were doing, and they did well on their own. They didn't need our help. They came up with a plan that was fair and as balanced as could be under the sequester situation, and it was bipartisan. The amendment that is being filibustered is sponsored by MIKULSKI and SHELBY. So this is a real shame.

I said last week when we were going on this bill that we would have opportunities for amendments. I hope we can get on the bill and have some amendments offered, but each day that goes by—and we have wasted 2 so far—we are unable to have the amendment process. We had yesterday waiting all day for Harkin and Cruz because that is the first Democratic amendment and the first Republican amendment. They are still on deck, waiting to come whenever the umpire says we can go forward—the umpire being one Senator.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

THE BUDGET

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, four years, four long years, that is how

long Kentuckians and Americans from coast to coast have had to wait for Senate Democrats to perform their most basic of legislative responsibilities.

Later today, we hope, that long wait will come to an end when they finally release a budget plan.

Given what we have heard about that budget so far, it is obvious why they refused to release one for so many years.

We hear it won't prevent programs such as Medicare from going bankrupt.

We hear it contains yet more wasteful "stimulus" spending, spending that turns out to be a lot more effective at generating jokes for late-night comedians than jobs.

And in order to finance more spending, we hear it relies on more than \$1 trillion—that is trillion with a T—in new taxes, including on the middle class. Remember, Washington Democrats already got more than \$600 billion in taxes this year. So where is this new revenue going to come from, charities, the home mortgage interest deduction? Will they go after families and small businesses yet again?

At least there is one thing we almost certainly know: their budget will never balance—not today, not tomorrow, not ever.

If that was my vision for the country, frankly I would want to hide it from the American people too.

Look, a budget like that would be a disaster for our country. It would betray those who are going to need Medicare when they retire.

It would betray the younger Americans who would be forced to grapple with the consequences of Democrats' failure to get serious about the debt.

It would betray the hard-working middle-class families that simply can't afford higher taxes, especially in the Obama economy.

And if that is really the kind of budget Senate Democrats plan to offer, it would sacrifice Americans' hopes for sustained economic recovery at the altar of higher taxes and bloated, unaccountable government.

It would also draw an important contrast with the budget Republicans put forward yesterday.

Because here is the thing: Republicans believe we should be growing the economy, not the government—and the House Republican budget reflects just those priorities.

It is a budget that does something else too; it actually balances.

That is important for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it would help unleash economic growth and bring down our country's massive debt load. Interest payments on the national debt alone are set to exceed everything we spend on defense in just a few years' time, so the path we are on clearly is not a sustainable one.

With that in mind, I hope Democrats offer something serious today. I hope they face up to the fact that they already got the revenue they are going to

get. So that they can start dealing with the real issues that are leading us to fiscal ruin.

And I hope they will finally stop trying to shield the Washington establishment from every single attempt to inject a little accountability and reform, because if the reports I have seen are correct, the budget they plan to offer would do none of these things. It would only speed up the dangerous trajectory we are on rather than change it; entrench government waste and cronyism rather than root it out; and make things worse for the families we represent rather than give them hope. Hope is something the American people really need right now. They have been battered by the President's economy. They are tired of seeing their money wasted on an endless labyrinth of self-perpetuating bureaucracy.

So I am calling on my Democratic friends to shelve the extremist liberal budget we have been hearing so much about. Let's get serious here and start doing the things necessary to make government more efficient, more pro-growth, more responsive, and more compassionate—in other words, enact the same priorities Republicans have and, frankly, the priorities many of our constituents have too.

After 4 long years, Senate Democrats should be willing to do more than just protect their buddies in government at all costs—to offer Americans something better than a budget that would expand the IRS and crush the middle class.

The American people deserve better than that. Haven't they waited long enough already for true growth-oriented reform?

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND FULL-YEAR CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2013

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 21, H.R. 933.

The clerk will report the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 21, H.R. 933, a bill making appropriations for the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other departments and agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I wanted to make a few comments. We have finished our analysis of this bill. The bill has 587 pages and spends well over \$1 trillion. We finished at 9 p.m. last

night. We have no objection to moving to the bill through a fair and open process. We will be happy to submit our ideas to the chairman and ranking member of the Appropriations Committee. There is a lot we ought to discuss about this bill. However, there is no attempt to filibuster the bill. There was an attempt to do our job, which was to actually read the bill and see what is in it so we would be prepared to offer constructive criticisms to the bill.

With that, I leave and I will be back on the floor in a little bit when the managers of the bill come to the floor. If they want to offer amendments and ask unanimous consent to move on to the bill, I am sure there will be no objection.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I respect my friend from Arizona. He is my friend, and we have worked together on a bipartisan basis. I respect his right as a Senator and his responsibility as a Senator to speak on issues that he thinks are important to our Nation and his home State as well as to offer amendments if that is the appropriate approach he wants to use. However, we have wasted a day. We lost a day in the U.S. Senate.

Yesterday was the day to begin the amendment process and we could not. Senators objected to our coming to this process and even offering an amendment on the continuing resolution, which is the Federal budget for the remainder of this year; in other words, until September 30. We know we are just days away from the continuing resolution expiring. We don't want the government to shut down; we do want to fund the government. We understand there must be spending cuts and there is a healthy difference of opinion on where those cuts should be made. The Senator from Arizona was on the floor yesterday and we spoke of this.

One aspect of this bill, which I wish to address for a moment, is the Department of Defense appropriations. This is a new responsibility which I have on the Senate Appropriations Committee, and it is an awesome responsibility. Not only are we dealing with the security of the United States of America, first and foremost, we are dealing with a massive spending bill. This is larger than any other spending bill in the Federal Government.

Last week the House of Representatives passed a continuing resolution which covers the Department of Defense for the remainder of this year. Many changes are included in there, but that was done along with the military construction budget and the Veterans Administration budget. That was all finished last week. It was all sent to us by the House last week ready for us to address it if we cared to.

Well, we had that chance yesterday, and we didn't do it. Now we have another chance today, and we should take

it. We have a lot to do in a limited amount of time. We have this week and the next to accomplish not only the passage of this Federal budget for the remainder of this year but also next week we will begin consideration of a budget resolution for spending in the next fiscal year. Those are two awesome responsibilities back to back and up against the Easter recess.

Senator HARRY REID, the Democratic majority leader, has come to the floor expressing some frustration. He wanted to move on this continuing resolution this week—as early as yesterday—and give Members an opportunity to offer amendments. There were several Members who stepped forward prepared to do so, but there was a stop. There was a hold.

I understand the Senator from Oklahoma—and I believe my friend from Arizona may echo his remarks—is prepared to not stand in the way of any of the amendments. If Members wish to offer amendments, they can do so, and I hope they will.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, could I ask my friend a question while he is on that subject?

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask permission to engage in a dialogue with my friend from Arizona.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCAIN. I say to my friend from Illinois that there is no further objection. The Senator from Oklahoma and I have reviewed the bill and yesterday we discussed its length and our obligations. I promise to my friend from Illinois that we will not rehash that discussion we had. We have no objection whatsoever to taking up amendments right now and moving forward with that. I hope that is perfectly clear to all Members. Very frankly, I am eager to move forward.

I will mention to my friend from Illinois that I appreciate the new responsibilities he has. I appreciate the responsibilities he has addressing, as he just said, the largest single part of our appropriations bill which is in the Defense authorization. During the intervening time we had requested, I came up with, for example, \$65 million for Pacific coast salmon restorations for States, which includes Nevada. We are going to restore salmon restoration in the State of Nevada?

Also listed here is the Department of Defense to overpay contracts by an additional 5 percent—totaling \$15 million—for Native Hawaiian-owned companies. I would be glad to include this long list for the RECORD.

There is a request for \$993,000 in grants to dig private wells for private property owners; \$10 million for USDA high-energy cost grant program to go to subsidize electricity bills in Alaska and Hawaii; \$5.9 million for economic impact initiative grants. The list goes on and on.

I say to my friend from Illinois that we were trying to examine this legisla-

tion—the 587 pages or whatever it is—to find this sort of issue. It is our obligation to do so. We have found these things, and we are still finding additional elements.

I see my old friend, the distinguished majority leader, on the floor. We are ready to move forward with amendments. I was saying to my friend from Illinois that we found numerous additional provisions in this legislation that we think are important for debate and discussion. I won't go through all of them, but some of the items include \$120 million for Guam; \$5 million for the National Guard STARBASE Youth Program; \$154 million for alternative energy resource. It goes on and on. In the meantime we have ships that cannot deport, planes that cannot fly, and men and women we cannot train and equip. Yet we have this kind of stuff on the appropriations bills.

I want to share with my colleagues that the Senator from Oklahoma and I finished examining this bill yesterday. We are prepared with amendments and moving forward with vigorous debate. If there was any misunderstanding about that, I apologize to the majority leader and my friend from Illinois.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as I said yesterday on the floor, I have nothing but the highest respect for my friend from Arizona. I know he looks into things very deeply, and I appreciate his peacemaking. Even though he is a famous man in America and the world because of his wartime experiences, he is also a peacemaker, and I am grateful for that.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to proceed be agreed to.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND FULL-YEAR CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2013

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate will proceed to H.R. 933.

The clerk will report the bill.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 933) making appropriations for the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other departments and agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 26

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Mr. REID. On behalf of Senators MIKULSKI and SHELBY, I call up their substitute amendment, as modified, which is at the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the amendment.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] for Ms. MIKULSKI and Mr. SHELBY proposes an